

MEET MY BUDDY, MEL

*For a small guy,
MEL has some big ideas—
ESPECIALLY when he responds
to short-essay questions in his Senior English class:*

Every short-essay answer
requires a **MAIN IDEA**,
some **EVIDENCE** and **ELABORATION**,
and a **LINKING STATEMENT**
that ties the "proof" to the point!

(i)

ANSWER THE QUESTION
as EXPLICITLY as possible.

(ii)

*Point to and explain, in detail,
SPECIFIC, OBSERVABLE,
LOGICAL EXAMPLES
that serve as EVIDENCE.*

(iii)

*Explain PRECISELY, in SPECIFIC DETAIL,
how the EVIDENCE
“PROVES” your point.*



ZOUBEK

M = "Main Idea"

*An explicit, detailed, thoughtful,
PRECISE answer to the question.*

*Your main idea (or CLAIM)
shouldn't "dance around the question."
It should restate the question and then ANSWER IT!*

E = Evidence

*Specific EXAMPLES (or "the proof")
pulled from some artifact, experience,
or outside resources.*

*Your EVIDENCE must DEMONSTRATE
how or why your answer is correct.*

L = Link

*Face it: EVIDENCE doesn't "explain itself."
You need to "LINK" your "PROOF" to your POINT.
EXPLAIN exactly how your EVIDENCE
"shows" that your answer is correct.*

EXAMPLE QUESTION:

As communities look to cut costs in education, should the school week be shortened from five to four days, with an hour and a half of instruction added to each day?

Here is one possible answer:

*In an effort to save money,
the school week should run
Monday through Thursday,
with each day extended
by an hour-and-a-half
to make up for lost time.*

*Currently, buses use costly fuel
on five round-trips,
going from various stops to our campus
and then from campus back to those stops.*

*On a four-day schedule,
schools would save money on gas
and rack up less mileage
on each school bus.*

MAIN IDEA

A **“CONCRETE ANSWER”** to (that also restates) the question:

In an effort to save money, the school week should run Monday through Thursday, with each day extended by hour-and-a-half longer to make up for lost time.

**NOTICE THAT THE WRITER
RESTATES THE QUESTION IN THE ANSWER.**

**In ANY formal writing assignment, you should always
WRITE AS IF YOUR READER HAS ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA
WHAT QUESTION YOU WERE ASKED.**

**Pretend your reader
KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT YOU, NOTHING ABOUT YOUR CLASS,
NOTHING ABOUT THE QUESTION YOU WERE ASKED,
AND NOTHING ABOUT WHY THE QUESTION
WAS ASKED IN THE FIRST PLACE.**

**Compose your answer in such a way
that you are “SPELLING IT ALL OUT”
—in thoughtful, precise, specific detail—
for ANY READER to understand.**

EVIDENCE

"THE PROOF"

What FACTUAL INFORMATION, drawn from some experience or an outside resource demonstrates the need for a shorter school week?

Currently, buses use costly fuel on five round-trips, going from various stops to our campus and then from campus back to those stops.

**The EVIDENCE above is indisputable—
to drive to and from school on five consecutive days,
school buses use a lot of gas.**

**But in that example,
THE EVIDENCE IS JUST SITTING THERE ALL BY ITSELF.**

**Sure, the writer answered the question
(*“the school week should be shortened”*)
and made an interesting observation
(*“school buses use a lot of fuel over five consecutive days”*).**

**But the EVIDENCE alone is just an interesting factoid;
IT DOES NOT SINGLE-HANDEDLY PROVE THE WRITER’S POINT.**

The writer needs to make a connection
between the evidence and the main idea.

**When YOU write, PRETEND THAT EVERY SINGLE READER
needs to have this connection “spelled out” for them.
How EXACTLY does the EVIDENCE prove the writer’s point?**

LINK

What's the SPECIFIC CONNECTION
between the answer and "the proof"?

*On a four-day schedule,
schools would save money on gas and rack up
less mileage on each school bus.*

**MESSAGE CLEAR
AND POINT TAKEN!**



**By comparison,
HERE IS A POORLY WRITTEN ANSWER:**

*School should be four days long.
If it was shorter,
they would save money.
They would save money
because they wouldn't use much.*

YES—

A STUDENT ACTUALLY WROTE THIS.

Let's use MEL to pick it apart.

MAIN IDEA

As readers, we have no idea what this sentence is trying to say.

A school day should be four days long?

The school *building* should be four days long?

Neither of these statements makes much sense.

Furthermore, what question was this person trying to answer?

**If we don't know the AUTHOR'S PURPOSE,
then we have no reason to care about the writing.**

EVIDENCE

"If it was shorter, they'd save money."

If *what* was shorter? *Who* would save money?

Poor pronoun use aside,

THIS STATEMENT IS NOT EVIDENCE—

IT'S AN UNSUPPORTED OPINION.

The writer provides no basis whatsoever
for believing that this opinion is a truth.

LINK

"They would save money because they wouldn't use much."

Whose *they*? What wouldn't they use?

THIS SENTENCE PROVIDES NO LINK

BETWEEN THE EVIDENCE AND THE MAIN IDEA.

(Of course, neither the evidence nor the main idea
made much sense to begin with.)

Here is a **better,**
more **thorough** answer:

*If school districts want to save money,
then the school week should run
Monday through Thursday
with all school buildings
closed every Friday.*

*Over the course of a five-day school week,
students and teachers
use water and electricity
around the clock.*

*Cutting one day from the schedule
would eliminate a whole day
of water and electricity use
for an entire school building.*

MAIN IDEA

A **"CONCRETE"** answer to (that also restates) the question:

*If school districts want to save money,
then the school week should run
Monday through Thursday with all school buildings
closed every Friday.*

EVIDENCE

"THE PROOF"

What **FACTUAL INFORMATION**, drawn from some experience
or an outside resource demonstrates the need
for a shorter school week?

*Over the course of a five-day school week,
students and teachers use water and electricity
around the clock.*

LINK

What's the **SPECIFIC CONNECTION**
between **THE ANSWER** and **THE PROOF**?

*Cutting one day from the schedule would eliminate
a whole day of water and electricity use
for an entire school building.*

Organizing, then writing, the most cohesive stand-alone or body paragraphs possible . . .

- M** = THE MAIN IDEA
The **claim statement** of your paragraph. What are you trying to *prove*?
- E** = EVIDENCE AND ELABORATION
What **research, facts, and examples** help *prove* your point?
- L** = LINKS
Explain *exactly* how your examples link-to or **support** your main idea (**claim**)? What are *the connections*?
- CON** = CONCLUSIONS
Restate, using stronger wording, your **claim**; state its importance (exigency); summarize *exactly* how the information in your paragraph “proves” your point.

M

Indent

—MAIN IDEA—
(Claim Statement)

E

(Transition to 1st Example)

—FIRST EXAMPLE—
(Evidence/Elaboration)

L

—LINK—
(Explanation, Support,
“Connections”)

E

(Transition to 2nd Example)

—SECOND EXAMPLE—
(Evidence/Elaboration)

L

—LINK—
(Explanation, Support,
“Connections”)

E

(Transition to 3rd Example)

—THIRD EXAMPLE—
(Evidence/Elaboration)

L

—LINK—
(Explanation, Support,
“Connections”)

CON

—CONCLUSIONS—
(Restate claim,
its exigency,
and summarize how info
“proves” your point)

—INTRODUCTORY TRANSITIONAL PHRASES—

ILLUSTRATION

for example, for instance, for one thing, to illustrate, as an illustration, as illustrated by, as an example, in this case, to demonstrate, specifically, on account of, because, to enumerate

CONTRAST AND COMPARISON

In contrast, contrast, contrasted by the same token, conversely, instead, likewise, on one hand, on the other hand, on one side, on the other side, on the contrary, rather, similarly, yet, and yet, but, however, still, nevertheless, nonetheless, consequently, notwithstanding, therefore, otherwise, still, true—but, besides, likewise, accordingly, but accordingly, as a result, for this reason, after all, though, in the same way, in like manner, comparatively, coupled with, correspondingly, identically, likewise, similar, in similar fashion, together with, along with, thus, as such, jointly, adjacently, as opposed to, in a like fashion

GENERALIZING

as a rule, as usual, for the most part, generally, generally speaking, ordinarily, usually

EXEMPLIFYING

chiefly, especially, for instance, in particular, markedly, namely, particularly, including, specifically, such as, otherwise, thereupon, wherefore, neighboring on, equally

EMPHASIS

also, above all, chiefly, with attention to, especially, particularly, singularly, similarly, in addition, additionally, for this reason, for this purpose, hence, even more, indeed, to repeat, by all means, of course, doubtedly, certainly, without a doubt, undoubtedly, to that end, in truth, in fact, really, in truth



EXCEPTION

aside from, barring, except, excepting, excluding, exclusive of, other than, outside of, save for, granted, in spite of

RESTATEMENT

indeed, in essence, in other words, namely, that is, that is to say, in short, in brief, to put it differently, moreover, furthermore, hence, thus, to clarify, to rephrase it, to put it another way, to sum it up, in sum, in summary, in brief

SEQUENCE AND TIME

accordingly, at first, first of all, to begin with, in the first place, in the second place, in the third place, at the same time, now, until now, for now, for the time being, the next step, in time, this time, in turn, later on, meanwhile, next, then, soon, soon after, the meantime, later, earlier, simultaneously, afterward, in conclusion, with this in mind, immediately, never, after, so far, at length, once, during, afterwards, in the meantime, sometimes, whenever, at the top, due to

SUMMARIZING

after all, all in all, all things considered, briefly, by and large, in any case, in any event, in brief, in conclusion, to conclude, on the whole, in short, in summary, in the final analysis, in the long run, on balance, to sum up, to summarize, finally, maybe

DIVERSION

by the way, incidentally, admittedly, albeit

DIRECTION AND SPACE

here, there, over there, beyond, beyond that, wherever, nearly, opposite, under, above, to the left, to the right, in the distance, in the forefront, in the foreground, within sight, out of sight, across, beneath